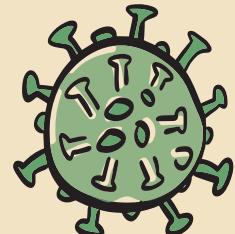




# Managing epidemics

Key facts about major deadly diseases



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*Managing epidemics: key facts about major deadly diseases*

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# Foreword



This year marks the 100th anniversary of Spanish flu, the deadliest outbreak in recorded history. Up to 50 million people were killed, more than the death toll from the First World War.

Thankfully, we have not seen a public health emergency on that scale since then. But we may at any time. Outbreaks are a fact of life, and the world remains vulnerable. We do not know where or when the next global pandemic will occur, but we do know that it will take a terrible toll, both on human life, and on the global economy.

None of us will ever forget the West African Ebola outbreak in 2014. It taught us a valuable lesson: that global health security is only as strong as its weakest link. No-one is safe until everyone is safe.

Keeping the world safe is one of WHO's three top strategic priorities in our new General Programme of Work. We are setting ourselves a goal that over the next five years, 1 billion more people will be better protected from epidemics and other health emergencies.

This manual is a valuable tool to help countries make progress towards that goal. It offers expert guidance to help WHO's country representatives and others to respond quickly in the earliest stages of an outbreak.

But it's not enough just to respond to outbreaks. We must do our best to prevent them by addressing

Can we create a pandemic-free world? There is no such thing as a guarantee, but with meticulous preparation and rapid response, we can prevent most outbreaks from getting out of control, and limit the impact of those that spread internationally.

First, we must build and sustain resilient capacities at national, regional and global levels to prevent, detect and respond to outbreaks, in accordance with the International Health Regulations.

And second, we must ensure that populations affected by emergencies have rapid access to essential life-saving health services, including medicines and vaccines.

That's why WHO works all around the world to strengthen health systems, built on the foundation of people-centred primary health care that focuses on health promotion and disease prevention, with a strong focus on surveillance systems.

Delivering on these priorities will cost money of course, but only a fraction of what remaining unprepared will

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